

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

July 29, 2019

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt:

As we have made clear, we are strongly opposed to the provision slipped into Public Law 115-97 that mandated oil and gas lease sales on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Arctic Refuge), and equally opposed to the haste with which the Department is moving towards a lease sale two years ahead of the deadline established in P.L. 115-97. While the Department of the Interior (DOI) has made it clear that it does not respect the tremendous wilderness, wildlife, and human rights values of the Arctic Refuge, we had hoped that—particularly given your repeated personal assertions of faithful adherence to the law at recent Congressional hearings—DOI would respect the environmental statutes such as the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and National Environmental Policy Act designed to properly analyze and minimize the impacts of oil and gas operations in this pristine area.

An article published by *Politico* last week titled, “How Science Got Trampled in the Rush to Drill in the Arctic,” makes it clear that far from properly adhering to the law, DOI is ignoring and suppressing concerns expressed by career scientists and producing rushed and politically-influenced environmental reviews while trying to pass such reviews off as the work of dispassionate experts.¹ This is not the first time that evidence has surfaced showing political efforts to suppress scientific concerns about efforts to explore for oil in the Arctic Refuge,^{2,3} but the evidence presented in this article is even more direct and damning than in previous reports.

The article details a process that is described as, “off the rails,” provides evidence that, “the work of career scientists has at times been altered or disregarded to underplay the potential impact of oil and gas development,” and details the extraordinary and potentially career-threatening efforts of Bureau of Land Management scientists who are documenting their concerns in the administrative record. These allegations demand a full investigation, and the immediate cessation of planning for a lease sale this upcoming winter until scientific concerns are fully raised and properly addressed.

¹ A. Federman, “How Science Got Trampled in the Rush to Drill in the Arctic,” *Politico*, July 26, 2019.

² D. Grandoni, “The Energy 202: Trump administration moves forward with Arctic oil plan wildlife staff deem ‘not adequate,’” *The Washington Post*, August 21, 2018.

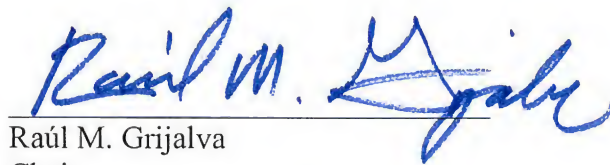
³ K. Brugger, “Interior hid scientists’ criticism of ANWR drilling: report,” *Environment and Energy Publishing*, March 12, 2019.

In order for the House Natural Resources Committee to fulfill its oversight responsibility in this area, we ask that you provide the committee with the following no later than August 16, 2019:

1. All documents and communications of employees and persons between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Land Management, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Land and Minerals Management, and the Immediate Office of the Secretary regarding the Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) released in December 2018;
2. All original documents and subsequent revisions drafted by employees or persons of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the DEIS;
3. All documents and communications that show the editing process for the portions of the DEIS prepared by employees or persons of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, including information sufficient to show who made or recommended each edit; and
4. All documents and communications from Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management Joe Balash regarding the development and editing of the DEIS.

Please refer to the attached instructions on how to respond to this document request. As specified therein, upon completion of the document production, please submit a written certification that a diligent search has been completed and all responsive documents have been produced to the Committee. If you have any questions about this request, please contact the House Natural Resources Committee staff at (202) 225-6065.


Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Chair
House Natural Resources Committee



Jared Huffman
Chair
Subcommittee on Water,
Oceans, and Wildlife



Alan S. Lowenthal
Chair
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress